

## Pre-Election Campaign Communication and Publicity: Political Phenomenon, Structure, and Functions

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### **Pre-Election Campaign Communication and Publicity: Political Phenomenon, Structure, and Functions\***

#### *Abstract*

*From political practitioners' point of view the pre-election campaign publicity is a complicated political phenomenon and at the same time the process built upon the rules of political communication that fulfills a number of consistent functions during campaign. Among these functions are: political party, new election bloc or separate candidate's name identification; election bloc and candidate's image building; election platform identification, issue development and exploitation; campaign messages symbolization and advertising as well as others. The author came to the conclusion that these types of factors in most cases motivate voter choices in elections in Ukraine.*

The pre-election publicity campaign can be contemplated from various analytical and practical perspectives. From a political practitioner's viewpoint the basic task of the election process subjects — political party and election bloc leaders as well as separate candidates in a single-mandate constituency — is a campaign message's skilful presentation (or "selling" — if to apply market terminology) to voters and receiving a proper number of votes for winning the election. For this purpose actu-

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Translated from the Ukrainian text "Peredvyborcha komunikatsiino-ahitatsiina kampaniia: politychnyi fenomen, struktura, funktsii", *Sotsiologiia: teoriia, metody, marketynh*, 2002, №1, pp. 80–100.

ally, the campaign staffs of each party (electoral bloc) or candidate organize and carry out the pre-election publicity campaign.

From a political science perspective, the pre-election publicity campaign is carried out to help the so-called typical voter (who virtually is a key participant of election process) to deepen understanding of the crucial role of his or her vote and by weighing all pros and cons, to make the conscious choice.

However, a thoroughly weighed and conscious choice can be made only under conditions when a typical voter (let us assume he has enough time and the appropriate political background) attentively familiarizes himself or herself with the programs of all participants in the election campaign, compares them, and in the case of necessity, gets additional information from each candidate and/or party (bloc), and then selects the most convincing political platform, resonating with his or her value system as well as personal and social expectations. But unfortunately, such ideal confluence of circumstances practically never happens. Therefore candidates and their political consultants (technicians) pursue during the pre-election publicity campaign more pragmatic functional purposes, and tasks.

Generally speaking the pre-election publicity campaign as a political phenomenon is a systematized activity of the candidates for deputy (political parties or electoral blocs) with a purpose to attract voters' attention to their personal (or corporate) qualities, election programs, and to induce them to an electoral behavior that corresponds with political interests of a certain subject of the election race.

The pre-election publicity campaign may be carried out in different forms and by various means of communication.

First, it can be conducted in the form of direct communications of candidates or their authorized persons and activists with the voters. Among these forms are: oral presentations at citizen gatherings, meetings with collectives of voters, private conversations with separate voters, and distribution of various forms of printed publicity materials (information posters, leaflets, letters, booklets, handouts and so on).

Second, the pre-election publicity campaign can be carried out in the way of indirect communications of candidates with voters and using mass media. Through media channels they publicize various materials, organize public discussions and "round tables", press conferences, interviews, and speeches as well as publicize political advertising, video clips and features or disseminate other messages provided they comply with current legislation.

From the point of view of the technological or functional approach to political communications, the pre-election publicity campaign is carried out for the sake of achievement of the following practical objectives:

1. *To attract the attention* of voters to the various candidates for deputies, to their personal, business and political qualities or to political parties and electoral blocs, to electoral lists of candidates for deputy nominated by them.
2. *To inform voters of the election programs* of candidates, political parties, and election blocs, to provide the electorate with a system of arguments about the pressing problems and methods of their solution offered by a candidate or political party (bloc).
3. *To educate voters*, helping them to familiarize themselves with the information of certain content, to achieve a situation that voters when voting will be motivated by the gained knowledge. Of course, it is necessary to remember that the election campaign is not the best time for education in the true meaning of the word.
4. *To reinforce* the attitudes and line of behavior of those voters who share a candidate or party's position, and to constantly emphasize the ideological, political, spiritual, and other values that unite with constituents.
5. *To modify the behavior of voters* to make them interested in a candidate or party's position. It concerns first of all of those voters who have not yet made a decision (the so-called "swing vote") as well as a passive part of electorate (especially youth). They are to be persuaded to participate in voting and to be convinced that for the sake of democracy — when it is necessary to make a choice between the past and future even — one vote can be crucial.
6. *To alter or to try to alter the attitudes of voters* who are not sharing the ideological and political position or the election program of the candidate or a party (bloc). Here it is necessary to remember that such a task is extremely difficult one. The convinced supporters of the opponent tend to avoid information and will not pay much attention to dissenting arguments that are opposed to their own points of view. They are inclined to seek out information that is consistent with, or in support of, their party and their own attitudes.

It is clear that political communications, character, and style of election campaigns and hence, the technology and forms of pre-election campaign publicity in single-mandate constituencies and in multi-

mandate all-state constituency — where lists of candidates from political parties or electoral blocs of parties are offered — essentially differ. In contrast to the individual candidate in a single-mandate constituency, candidates who have been included in electoral list of parties or electoral blocs of parties in many respects resemble matches in a matchbox. In this case a “box” with a certain logo (containing the full name of political party or electoral bloc with the enumeration of parties that formed the bloc) as well as the inscription of surnames, names, patronymics of the first five candidates is offered to the voter. To make a reasonable choice, the voter should be able “to decipher” dozens of such “logos”. At the same time he should also “identify” names of candidates for deputies who will be included in the ballot in the single-mandate constituencies of various levels. Hence it is known that the elections to the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) and to the institutions of local governing are conducted simultaneously.

As it is known, young political parties of Ukraine and blocs created by them are not yet experienced in conducting pre-election campaign publicity with the application of such logos (“symbols”). It is enough to recall the unprofessional political advertising that was widely used for the first time during the Parliamentary Elections of 1998 in Ukraine.

But irrespective of the type of election campaigns, they always have a similar functional task: to target particular groups of voters and enlist their support. Therefore to have hope for success, managers of election publicity campaigns of any scale should adhere to general key principles. Namely:

- Permanent analytical work, revealing issues, needs, and interests of priority voter groups, and taking this information into account when campaign messages are developed and communicated;
- Systematically planned communication and publicity arrangements and their completion in due time;
- Continuous evaluation of performed activities and if necessary making appropriate changes and applying additional efforts;
- Special attention not only to mass media, but also to interpersonal communications with the voters during campaign;
- Making a reasonable selection of mass media channels in order to effectively reach priority groups of constituents and communicate publicity materials to them.

At the same time, each election campaign is always unique. The pre-election publicity campaign in the Parliamentary Elections of 2002 in Ukraine was also specific — and it is quite natural. A uniform recipe

that guarantees successful election results does not exist. Only a creative approach to campaign management (providing that a number of general rules are observed) gives promise for success. It is not a secret that the election campaign as a whole (including pre-election publicity) is not only a science but also an art of application of scientific knowledge into practice.

The civilized approach to election technologies as well as forms and methods of pre-election campaign publicity implies the conformity of messages and actions of candidates (parties and blocs) for deputies with current legislation, ethical and moral norms prevailing in society. Just within the framework of this legitimate field, candidates must develop their publicity campaigns for constituent votes.

There always exists a temptation to resort to manipulative actions, to the application of administrative resources, and to the so-called “gray” or “dirty” election technologies. Among them there is a set of actions directed to the neutralization or elimination of competitors from an election race. Within such an activity the candidate (party or bloc) together with campaign staff apply forms and methods of influence on voters and opponents that contradict the norms of public morals. This kind of activity often balances on the verge of violation of the laws of Ukraine (and can violate them).

## **Democracy and Communications**

If to remove the numerous myths and theoretical abstractions, the performance of a representative democratic system can be imagined in such a way: political leadership is given to that individual who best of all is able to convince the citizens that he or she is the only person capable to carry out this function and to ensure well-being for the people. An American political scientist, Jay Bryant, used to say, “A democracy is a political system that rewards *communications* power, in precisely the same way the older systems rewarded *physical* power” [1, p. 85].

The early forms of democracy, including the American form of 18<sup>th</sup> century, have shown that this communications power had been firstly connected (like physical strength in prehistoric times) with a separate individual. A premium was placed on oratory skills and to win an election, a politician had to be able to deliver a thunderous stump speech (as it was in Periclean Athens or in the epoch of Lincoln’s America).

Later with the development and the increased complexity of communication technologies, the communication power of an individual

shifted to corporate communications power. During the age of domination of the newspapers, the technology and art to use various forms of printed words complete with pictures demonstrating evil were of prime importance. For example, according to Jay Bryant, “The Feast of Balthazaar” used by American newspapers in reporting the famous “boodle banquet” with robber barons — complete with pictures — may have cost candidate Blaine the presidency) [1, p. 85]. With the invention of radio, technology again changed the requirements for communication skills. Let us recall US President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s fireside radio chats, skillfully manipulating the communication technology of the time in order to convince the people of the necessity to keep him in political power to the next term.

Today the dominant communication technology belongs to television. American president Ronald Reagan was called “The Great Communicator” because of his skill at manipulating the television medium. However, TV — far more than newspaper and radio — is a corporate medium and its effective exploitation requires a team of skilled experts in election communication technologies. Some even assert, that a media consultant “is a modern knight” hired by a politician to get and maintain political power and is generously rewarded for the service.

Paid political advertising was not a major force in political communication of the newspaper and radio era, but with the coming of TV all of that changed. Present-day practices of political communication include advertising as well as public relations — an institution armed with technologies of creating newsworthy events. Indeed, utilization of television is by far the largest component of most election campaign budgets at the national and local levels.

Worldwide discussions of the use of paid advertising media (particularly TV commercials) during election campaigns is probably the most common component in debating strategies and tactics as well as understanding how elections are won in different countries today including Ukraine. But when focusing election campaign strategy on paid mass media, we must not lose sight of the fact that all publicity communications with constituents are intertwined during an election campaign. All means of publicity communication (paid advertisement, free publications in the press, posters and leaflets, statements at voter meetings, and face to face conversations with constituents, etc.) pursue the same objectives: to receive the necessary quantity of votes and to defeat their opponents. Therefore a strategy of a winning campaign should include all means and channels of communications.

But in spite of the fact that the greatest opportunities for a victory are connected with an effective utilization of TV, it is unfortunately an ambiguous medium — first of all, as a means of psychological influence. Indeed when we speak about TV, it is often difficult to distinguish clearly from real and unreal events on TV. For example, we know that a realistic looking event can be staged. Therefore it is not casual that public is somewhat ambivalent about mass media. Also for example, sociological surveys show that the level of trust in news media is rather low. In Ukraine only 4% of the population trust mass media completely and only 22% somewhat trust mass media. However, the fact is we are quite often subconsciously guided by what we are in doubt of.

## **Functional Structure of Political Communications**

Tentatively in political communications during election campaigns it is possible to set off a number of logically consecutive functional stages of publicity efforts. First, a publicity communications campaign should help voters to identify and recognize participants in an election race (separate candidates, political parties or election blocs). Then it is necessary to generate desirable images of election race participants or to improve (modify) the existing ones. Further, publicity communications serves to identify and to help voters recognize the election programs of the appropriate candidate, party or bloc. And at last, to contrast subjects of an election race and prove the advantages of one candidate, party or bloc over others, the political communication implies campaign publicity “for” or “against”. This is a function of criticisms or “attacks” of one subject of election campaign to others and a function of defense against attacks of opponents. We can also separately speak about such a specific function of political communication as “getting out the voters” (GOTV). This function is a sum total consequence of combinations of the previous functions.

Now we shall try to review the above-mentioned functional stages of political communications in detail.

*Name identification.* This first function of political communication during an election is crucial for planning and developing programs of mass media effective utilization as well as achieving victory in an election campaign.

We notice at once that the function of a candidate's or party's (bloc) name identification in the sphere of politics is much more important and



more difficult than product name (brand) identification in commercial marketing.

To better understand how important (and at the same time complicated) is the function of candidate name identification, we should pay attention to one marketing concept called “point of purchase”. The “point of purchase” for a product such as laundry detergent is typically situated in a specialized store (grocery store) or supermarket. The consumer enters into the aisle where the various choices are displayed, approaches a certain shelf, and makes his or her final selection. However, “the point of purchase” in politics (voter’s final selection of the candidate, party or bloc as a political product) is in the voting booth.

Let us consider one more important difference: in the voting booth, publicity or advertising materials are not (or should not be) on display. In the detergent section of a supermarket, one can find promotion booklets and colored advertising materials that the manufacturers might have spent millions of dollars on — to say nothing about cost of the promotion campaign that may last for years and years. In the voting booth, however, all of that is impermissible. Election law forbids display of any promotional or political advertising symbols of candidates, parties or electoral blocs.

Instead, the voter should make a choice only on the basis of the election ballot, which contains brief and objective information on candidates, parties, and electoral blocs. This information is printed in one color and a typeface selected not by the advertising creator, but most probably by the Central Election Commission on the bases of its members’ consent in regard to the functional expediency and reasons of convenience. So, the point is that if the names of parties (or electoral blocs of political parties) as well as inscription of surnames, names and patronymics of the first five candidates from every nominated list of parties (electoral blocs) — contained in the election ballot for voting in the multi-mandate constituency, or surnames, names, patronymic, dates of birth, places of residence, places of work, party affiliations of the separate candidates — contained in the ballot for voting in the single-mandate constituencies, — remain unknown for voters (that is, do not carry the entire weight of publicity and the advertising campaign behind it), one can say that the publicity communication efforts of campaign staffs of such subjects in the election race have failed.

Hence, the name identification and the subjects of election campaign recognition appear to be crucial because very few voters will vote for a party (bloc) or a candidate whose name or logo they do not know. Public

opinion surveys and election results analysis show that the majority of people vote for that candidate, party or bloc, whose name they better know or remember. Besides that, voters do not like to prefer any candidate if they have never heard his opponent. And in case they do not recognize either name, many voters will simply not vote at all for that office. To a certain extent, this is an explanation for the phenomenon of voter fatigue — the decline in the number of votes cast in local elections (to regional, city, and district councils) where election campaigns are often conducted with a lack of systematic methods. Therefore the further down in importance of elections we go, the more important (for voters) the name identification becomes relative to other functions of political communication.

In national elections, especially in presidential campaigns, very few resources are expended for name identification. It is because only well-known and well-identified persons run in such elections. During the Presidential Election in Ukraine being carried out in the 1999 we seldom saw billboards for presidential candidates. Besides, billboards and other outdoor advertising are paid medium that has a very limited range of effectiveness for additional name identification of already known candidates. Only a combination of well produced as well as psychologically correct and numerous exposed outdoor advertising can meet such an objective. It is particularly useful for poorly identified candidates running in single-mandate constituencies for the first time. As for the well-known candidates for deputy, name identification efforts would be waste of money.

Special attention should be paid to a newly formed election blocs' name identification. Almost all party blocs being formed for the Parliamentary Elections of 1998 in Ukraine (election blocs such as "Less Words ", "Ahead, Ukraine", "Block of Democratic Parties NEP (Democracy, Economy, Order)", "Labor Ukraine", "European Choice of Ukraine", "National Front", "SLON — Social-Liberal Association") had poor name identification even by partisans of the parties that formed the blocs. The Block of Democratic parties, "NEP", may serve as a good example. In fact, poor name identification and a distorted image (an artificial appeal to the logo — "NEP" — an abbreviation of the "New Economic Policy" being used by the communist regime in 1920s) "ruined" the well-identified political brand of the Democratic Party of Ukraine which may have allowed a party to overcome the 4% threshold if a traditional DPU — a well-identified name — had been used. At the same time, the preservation of well identified political parties' logos in a newly formed blocs (for example,

the Election bloc of the Socialist party of Ukraine and the Peasant Party of Ukraine “For Truth, for People, for Ukraine”) allowed voters to quickly identify a new political coalition and the bloc to receive votes on a large scale. It is even possible to say with confidence if the name of given bloc had been reduced to the slogan “For Truth, for People, for Ukraine”, the results of election for this party bloc (and first of all for the SPU) would appear very unfavorable.

Taking into account mistakes committed in bloc building in previous Parliamentary Elections (particularly, the insufficient understanding of such an important function of political communications during the campaign in regard to name identification of the new subjects of election race), many political parties were obliged to think about this issue in the election campaign of 2002. Let us also notice that certain conclusions have been drawn from previous failures. For example, the name of Viktor Yushchenko was added to the name of the election block “Our Ukraine”. Other election blocs and parties are trying to do the same. So, we are witnessing in Ukraine a new approach to bloc name identification by projecting a well-identified name and image with elements of charisma of known Ukrainian figures.

Besides, we see that for name identification among the broadest layers of the population, political parties mainly use television advertising. Noticeable and well-accentuated (mainly from the point of view of commercial advertising) actions to promote a brand on the political market have been carried out by the party “Apple”. The young party “New Generation of Ukraine” acted in the same direction. Despite some obtrusiveness of advertising, the party managed to quickly identify its name as “a political product” on the political market.

It testifies that TV, as a communication and publicity channel, is the most effective for name identification in the sphere of politics. It is true that another medium to reinforce the effect of name identification is outdoor advertising. Then follows newspaper advertising. Outdoor and newspaper advertising can appear quite sufficient for local election campaigns but not national. According to experts’ opinions the least effective for name identification in politics is advertising on radio.

But to use such highly expensive mediums as TV and newspapers exclusively for name identification of the candidate (not only in urban areas or regions, but also at the national level), means to waste money. Therefore it is simultaneously important with name identification to form a desirable image of the subject of the election campaign at any level.

*Image developing.* In the most simplified way, a candidate's (or political party, election bloc) image may be defined through the answer to the question: "What kind of a person is this candidate?" or "What kind of an organization or coalition is this party or bloc?" A thoughtful voter always wants to consider what kind of person he or she (party or bloc) is about to vote for, and these considerations may appear for him more important than to study political stands (program, platform) taken by the candidate or other subject of an election race. Therefore it is not by mistake that voters in general give more weight to image considerations than they do to issue considerations. For example, according to results of public opinion surveys in Ukraine, among the basic motives to vote for a certain candidate, the voters mentioned image characteristics, such as "I like personal qualities" — 30% ("Democratic Initiatives" Foundation together with SOCIS) [2]; "Party affiliation is not significant, the man as a person is more important" — 44.5% (O. Razumkov Center sociological service) [3].

The contemporary political process demands that in planning a campaign, every subject of election race should make an early image decision similar to the name decision discussed previously. That is, the campaign managers should determine first of all how they wish people to answer the question: "What kind of a person is this candidate?" or "What kind of an organization or coalition is this party or bloc?" Here wording is very important for the so-called "image statement" which, according to experts' opinion, should be approximately a paragraph long. The main prerequisite in developing such a statement is that it must be real. Image statements should be based not on general moral but pragmatic political considerations. If to take into account present-day political atmosphere in society and the ever-growing distrust in political structures, it is simply not wise to attempt to fool the public as to what kind of a person (organization, coalition) the candidate (party, bloc) is.

Now let us try to imagine the role that image plays at the moment of voting. Consider a typical voter in the voting booth. Most likely, he or she has earlier decided whom to vote for. A choice may be predetermined by voter party affiliation, political convictions, preliminary discussions with relatives or friends, and so on. But in any case the voter, prior to a preliminary decision whom to vote for, should identify a candidate (party, bloc) name and develop a positive or negative idea about him or her.

Otherwise, when the voter has not made a final decision yet before entering into the voting booth, he or she looks at the names on the ballot for a given race and quickly identifies them. His or her next step is to ask the

question concerning image of the candidate: "What kind of a person is this?" If he or she can answer this question for one candidate but not for the other the candidate for whom the question can be answered will surely get his or her vote. Let us also imagine that he or she can answer this question for a number of candidates. In this case a slightly different rule must be applied, namely, "what kind of emotions do they provoke?" For example, a typical voter from Western Ukraine, having read names of such known politicians as N. Vitrenko (a radical socialist) or P. Symonenko (a communist) will hardly be delighted.

A voter will vote for that person who has impressed him or her positively. But in any case the most important for the candidate (party, bloc) is the specific impression he or she (party, bloc) as a person has managed to produce to a voter — and that is an image.

Among the basic tools the candidate can use to increase his name identification as well as to develop a positive personal image, the most effective are: life stories describing the charismatic qualities of the candidate; candidate advertising as a good family man, or as a sensitive person, leader, reliable friend, and so on (it is advisable that all be accompanied with photos, video materials', etc.); publication of prominent facts from candidate's life that have motivated him or her to become a politician; and promotional materials about candidate's meetings with well-known people, outstanding statesmen, scientists, artists, and so on. To communicate this information to target voter groups, different channels should be used, such as: local mass media, outdoor advertising, leaflets with stories about the candidate; candidate speeches to voters; rallies with promotion materials; and regular meetings with voters, etc.

However, the development of a candidate's positive image is not an easy matter from two points of view. First, it needs a skilful application to different media channels and publicity techniques. Second, it is necessary to take into account the fact that the number of election candidates at any level, who simultaneously aspire to produce a positive impression to the typical voter, can reach several dozens. Under such conditions it is doubtful whether the voter will even remember any of them.

One should not forget one more important circumstance. Consider the 225 single-mandate deputies elected to the Verkhovna Rada. They are very different persons by appearance. There are men, women, representatives of different nationalities, political orientations and so on, but despite the differences they won elections. So, we can state that there is no single winning image. Professional media consultants do not even at-

tempt to adjust their clients to a single, predetermined mold. Rather, they seek ways to present their client as a real person in a positive light.

This insight also serves to guide an election campaign in dealing with candidate's image problems. The key here is that a candidate image problem should not be solved by pretending to be the opposite, but rather by seeking to portray the positive side of the candidate's quality.

The classic example for this was image problem of the former US President George Bush, which in 1988 was perceived as "a wimp" by majority of Americans. The problem was very much in the forefront during his presidential campaign in 1988, and was naturally unpleasant for him. His media consultants attempted to deal with it in a feisty interview with a popular American journalist Dan Rather, recommending George Bush "to show his character". But this did not result in an end to the "wimp" problem. For example, people who saw this interview did not come to the desired conclusion: "Gee, I guess I was wrong; he is not a wimp after all!" At best a typical American might have said: "Gee, George has overcome his wimpiness tonight".

Later, his wise consultants came up with the correct solution. In his convention acceptance speech, Bush called for a "kinder, gentler society". The phrase promptly became a sort of slogan for the campaign, and the "wimp" problem evaporated. The secrete was so that kindness and gentleness are the opposite side of the coin of wimpiness. That is why his image-makers tried to accentuate the good side of the image — a *real* Bush's character trait.

After being elected as US President, Bush mostly behaved himself as a kind and gentle wimp, but in the instance of the Persian Gulf War, he showed strength and decisive leadership. Of course, the war was not just a one-night performance as was the Rather's interview. It represented the sustained application of leadership over a period of months. Significant strength of leadership during several war months was demanded and Bush successfully displayed this quality. That almost caused the public to forget the existence of Bush's wimpiness. Of course, the war is not a mere campaign gimmick but a great event enough to accomplish something more important. In fact Bush's popularity among Americans considerably soared.

However, even winning a war is not enough to turn a (real) wimp into a decisive leader. The nature of a weak person — however, hidden — sooner or later will show itself. The same is with a strong person. Despite all attempts to make him "wimp" he is sure to show a strong character. As it is known, the highest Bush's approval rating of 91% was the highest ever

recorded for any US President. However, there were times when his approval rating dropped to 38%, one of the lowest for any president and only a couple of points higher than R. Nixon's in 1974 (36%).

We gave this example to emphasize the difficulty of political image development. The above example is vivid evidence of the fact that any candidate or other subject of an election race should bear in mind that irrespective of his will, the public can develop its own imagination of him based upon very unexpected things. Therefore, election race participants should permanently manage the image development process. They must work all that much harder to make sure that one clear, consistent image is portrayed. A positive image — once developed — has a tendency to gradually go away.

One should not forget that the image is a picture or metaphor, and the influence of such psychological factors upon electoral behavior is often crucial. In search of a particular image, a candidate (political party, bloc) should know that the pictures of the campaign speak most loudly on television, in print, and in person. Through these channels of communication the pictures of the campaign should accurately convey that image which was defined in the "image statement".

If to speak about Ukraine during election campaign of 2002 — in comparison with former campaigns where an ideological (doctrinal) factor prevailed — of special importance were the image factors and the influence of a charismatic leaders upon public opinion and on electoral behavior as well. The style of the election campaign of 2002 was visibly shifted in a direction to a significant personification of the political will of electorate — as well as of political parties' and election blocs' personification (for example, V. Lytvyn, Head of the Administration of the President of Ukraine, and A. Kinakh, the Prime-minister of Ukraine — both headed the election bloc "For a Single Ukraine"). Communication efforts were also transferred from political doctrine propaganda to advertising of some of the political leaders' qualities. Therefore the pragmatic task of image strategy development became important for participants in the 2002 election campaign.

One more important circumstance is connected with the process of election. From the very outset of election campaign we have witnessed a unique phenomenon when in Ukrainian politics there appeared a new need to estimate and compare the electoral weight of a highly rated (charismatic) leader on the one hand, and the well known political parties on the other. This is unusual as the process manifested itself in a form of granting an equal share of numbers of candidates in the single



electoral list of blocs nominated by a charismatic leader personally and by parties formed the bloc. In particular, the election bloc “Our Ukraine” of Viktor Yushchenko was a good example. Therefore the price of a separate personal image on the political market of Ukraine has already approached the price of separate, long time well-known political parties.

Such a phenomenon is quite usual for the civilized political market but unfortunately does not correspond to an archaic political culture of some subjects of the Ukrainian political market.

The course of events has shown, that some ambitious party leaders and activists believe that when election blocs are formed there is a threat to known party images to be blurred and dissolved within bloc names and to be in the shadow of a charismatic leader. By the way, some applicants for the Rukh (Peoples’ Movement of Ukraine) label have not stopped to take advantage of these circumstances (for example, Bohdan Boiko’s Peoples’ Movement of Ukraine for Unity was formed)

Undoubtedly the process of coalition building and forming of new election blocs that have popular names (labels) and are well known by the public is a painful one, although it demands certain concessions based upon cold political calculations.

The logic of reasoning is rather simple here. It is necessary to find out whether all the parties are capable of overcoming individually a threshold in 4% to enter Parliament and in total to receive more votes than by acting in a united bloc. Certainly the final answer to this question can be given only by the results of an election. But if to trust public opinion surveys, only the Peoples’ Movement of Ukraine (headed by H. Udovenko) — in case of withdrawing from the bloc — can definitely overcome the named barrier. Working together, the bloc “Our Ukraine” — according to data of different polls — can receive 15–20% of the votes. Therefore it is considered that under the condition of the use of Viktor Yushchenko’s image, the newly formed election bloc will be able to ensure parties a more numerous electorate, than the probable arithmetic sum of votes received by parties individually.

Taking this into account, members of the given bloc should be rather preoccupied with dynamic publicity communication, bloc “Our Ukraine” name identification, bloc leader image development, and the efficient bloc election program identification and positioning — than with separate party images and fear of finding themselves in the shadow of a single bloc name.



The world's political practice has highlighted a number of general laws related to a positive role of image (psychological stereotype) in the political sphere.

Firstly, an image is powerful and self-sufficient and under certain conditions an even more important factor of the political (electoral) process than a separate political course or a party. It is enough to recall Charles de Gaulle and Margaret Thatcher who became symbols of powerful political streams (Gaullism and Thatcherism) for a long period of time.

Secondly, in the context of pre-election publicity, an image gets the weight of a symbolic message of a bloc, party or separate candidate to those voters who are not deeply interested in political life issues and details of election programs. Such voters always represent the absolute majority.

Thirdly, under conditions of political interaction symbolization, the expediency to use an image (symbol), is caused by the necessity of prompt and the most effective rolling out of a new political actor (election bloc) on the political market and contrasting him or her on this market.

Finally, in a socio-psychological sense, the image of a politician (the same for a party or bloc) can be perceived by the electorate as a symbol of a certain set of pressing human (or public) needs. From the point of view of constituents, voting for a certain image bearer (a politician who personifies their aspirations) becomes the act of symbolic satisfaction of their urgent need.

So, Ukrainian parties should more attentively look at both the processes of symbolization of politics and the issues of ever growing influence of political images upon electoral behavior. The essence of this objective factor and world experience of its practical application to political campaigns should be carefully studied. Those political parties and blocs who are capable of doing it more efficiently within the pre-election campaign communication and publicity will increase their chances for victory.

### **Election Programs, Their Identification, and Influence upon Electoral Behavior**

It is a very complex task of a pre-election communication and publicity campaign of a candidate (political party, election bloc). A huge volume of substantial information the voters should identify and learn causes of its complexity.

As opposed to name identification and image development, with pre-election communication and publicity, the question is about publicity

with utilization not of social-psychological (emotional) factors, but of ideological, political, and of doctrinal (rational) abstract arguments. With this, their deep understanding the appropriate knowledge (philosophical, political, economic) is needed. However, a typical voter does not always have it.

At the same time it is necessary to take into account two already mentioned basic circumstances. On the one hand, the voter needs a lot of time (which he does not always have) to attentively familiarize himself with election programs of many subjects of an election race. On the other hand, he has to find and remember something specific and original and differentiate programs among themselves (especially when they differ a little in reality).

So, we see the issue is not a simple one. The real practice of election campaigns in many countries of the world proves that a small number of candidates (parties or blocs) build election campaigns exclusively upon the publicity of all ideas of their election programs.

As a matter of fact, many voters — except those ideologically motivated (and they are, as it was mentioned earlier, in an absolute minority) — are one-issue voters. They may feel so strongly about one issue (for example, national sovereignty, ecology, language issues, land privatization, education of children, crime and so on) that they will vote on the basis of a candidate's (party, bloc) stand on that issue which is broadly publicized during election campaign.

And it must be said, if such issues as unemployment, low salaries, delay of payments of pensions, etc., extremely disturb constituents, they will entirely concentrate their attention on them. It is difficult to expect that, for example, workers of state enterprises will vote for those who call for spending reductions in the public sector that would bring the automatic elimination of their jobs and growth of unemployment. As it is known in Ukraine, such issues are exploited by communists and therefore that named group of electorate relatively votes for them.

The pre-election publicity campaign among one-issue voters should obviously be closely targeted. In this case, the use of television is less effective for communists. Such media channels as direct mail, leaflets, possibly local radio, voter meetings etc., are much better. It means that one of the important differences between image and issue media is that image media is essentially general (a candidate should present the same image to everyone) whereas issue media is essentially targeted (there is no point in talking about agriculture policy to steelworkers).

Aside from one-issue voters, most constituents in Ukraine (the same as in other countries) have an ambivalent relationship with regard to political issues. They will stoutly maintain that they cast their vote based on the issues and will berate others for not doing so. They will criticize the candidates for ignoring the issues and engaging in mudslinging instead. In truth, the voters themselves as well as mass media ignore the issues. Post-election survey studies have consistently shown that only a very small minority (typically less than 10%) of the voters is able to name any issue when asked why they voted for their chosen candidate. It is known that candidate can give an issues-laden speech to a local voter meeting but what gets on the television news is far more likely to be his or her answer to a reporter's question: "Why is your rating trailing in the latest polls?"

Candidates, understanding how the "news-making" game works, therefore generally downgrade the issue content of their election program campaigns. Of course, they will deny this because one of the worst images a candidate can have is that of ignoring the issues. But it is known that in fact a candidate's issue promises generally bear little resemblance to the policy he or she will implement when elected.

There are other reasons why issues play only a subordinate role in voters' decision making. One is that very few voters really believe they know the answers to the social and economic issues that trouble them and may propose solutions. Common sense says if the voter is unsure of what the right course of action is to solve an issue, he or she is highly unlikely to base his vote on someone else's proposed solution, even assuming he had enough time to find out what the candidate's position is. He or she is far more likely to select someone who appears to be the kind of person he can trust to make wise decisions in such a matter. That, of course, is the candidate's image. In addition, it is highly questionable that the issues actively debated during election campaign and that seemed to be persuasive for voters on the day of elections, are in fact going to be in the focus of attention of newly elected deputies of the Verkhovna Rada.

But in any case, election program's issue messages are an important component of candidates' (parties, blocs) campaign communications efforts. The most important question is how to "pack up" and display (to position) the issues lest they should be lost in a mob of a numerous election race participants. The campaign's signs and headlines carry out name identification, pictures contribute to the image while issues are the body copy. Candidates should have a special talent to use mass media to advertise issues and to have an issue impact upon electorate.

To achieve better platform issue identification among voters the candidates (parties, election blocs) should use the advantages of mass media as effectively as possible. For this purpose it is important to use analytical TV shows: 1) to make presentations of a particular issue and to offer unique ways to solve it; 2) to give short interviews for radio and TV news channels on a selected issue; 3) to call press conferences for journalists on the same issue with subsequent information dissemination through mass media channels; 4) to organize profound commentaries on such issue presentations by well-known people through the same and other mass media channels; 5) to publish specially prepared analytical materials on the selected issue in popular newspapers and magazines; 6) and to organize keen “responses” (debates included) to the candidate’s newspaper publications and other media presentations. Such logic of consecutive steps may allow a precise identification of the most basic issues of an election platform and awareness among target groups of voters.

An ability to make news that deserves mass media attention is certainly a core factor of election campaign communications and publicity technologies. However, one should not forget that voters also receive relevant information from a multitude of alternative sources. Among them are: meetings with other candidates, candidate debates, exchanges of opinions with friends and associates, direct mailers, different kinds of entertainment programs, and so on. From a communication interaction perspective therefore, the election campaign resembles kaleidoscopes where messages of various contents and often from a variety of competing sources are reaching the voter. On the basis of this variety of interacting information, the voter produces a final impression about the ideological and political appearance or the so-called “generalized image” of a candidate’s political platform.

## **Publicity “For” and “Against” Techniques**

The analysts of election campaigns pay attention to a number of circumstances concerning the nature of the influence of advertising and publicity upon attitudes and beliefs of voters as well as ways of increasing the efficiency of pre-election publicity.

First, it concerns such a phenomenon of political communications known as “*riding-the-wave*”. Political practice has confirmed that candidates tend to reap greater returns by communicating or advertising on political issues or topics “in the news”.

Given the variety of information sources available to most voters, the major challenge facing the candidate and his media consultant is the production of messages that do not get lost in this cluttered environment. But making the news for the sake of news often leads to Pyrrhic victory because reporters tend to provide interpretations that run counter to the candidate's. It is often easier (and less risky) not to tailor news with the help of pseudo-events and paid messages, but to insert your opinion in themes that are currently regarded as newsworthy.

The political logic here is elementary. The mass media — especially television news — sets the public agenda by defining the issues that are particularly newsworthy. The constituents, as a rule, follow the agenda issues and gradually start to discuss them as the most important. At the same time news coverage boosts the accessibility of political issues and also politicizes these issues. So, issues that achieve prominence on the public agenda are especially powerful determinants of candidate evaluation and voting preference.

Clearly, it is in each candidate's interest to establish his or her credentials on the major issues of the day — that is to “ride-the-wave” or to speak every time on the most prominent topics. It is very important for a candidate to use paid media in both television and newspapers for publicity presentations in a way to earn further publicity in other media channels and, as a result, to have additional media reinforcement.

Second, it is necessary to pay attention to such a phenomenon of political communications known as “*recirculation*” of information. The idea is that news coverage (including criticism) of the candidate's publicity campaign energizes the publicity and advertisements under review. Obtaining the attention of news media is vital not only because the media lend much-needed credibility to the candidate's publicity campaign messages, but also because they provide access to vast audiences at virtually no cost.

In recent times journalists more often appointed themselves as referees who scrutinized campaign advertisements for their accuracy and veracity. For example, in the wake of 1988 presidential election in the USA, the American journalistic community achieved a general agreement concerning the need for improved ways to cover election campaigns. The known journalists and analysts suggested that the press should evaluate campaign publicity materials (advertisements including) on regular basis and condemn those who distorted or blurred reputation of candidates. The hope of the initiative was to deter candidates from airing delusive or inaccurate claims against each other. Thus, a new genre of cam-

paign journalism was born, devoted to monitoring campaign publicity and advertising.

In 1992 presidential elections in the USA, the genre of campaign journalism named the “ad-watch” became an organic part of campaign publicity and advertising monitoring. A special group of distinguished journalists as ad-watchers appeared regularly on the CNN network with their inspections and analyses of the publicity materials and advertisements aired by the presidential candidates. Today ad-watch reports are standard fare in print and broadcast outlets both at national and local levels.

But the effect of journalists’ inspections and analyzes of publicity materials and advertisements (ad-watch) turned out unexpected. One would expect to find that exposure to an ad-watch should shift voter preferences away from the candidate whose advertisements have been scrutinized. On the other hand, if the ad-watch works to the benefit of the candidate, this pattern should be reversed. But in reality, results indicated that ad-watches actually boosted the support of a candidate whose advertisement was scrutinized.

As it turned out, we have witnessed an effect of information recirculation. By scrutinizing the advertisement of a candidate, journalists attempted to prove the reasons, final conclusions, and evaluations actually repeated the more controversial (or vicious) segments of the advertisement that had been scrutinized. By recirculating the advertisement in the guise of news, the ad-watch journalist involuntary enhanced the believability of the campaign’s message of the scrutinized candidate. Ironically, political consultants especially welcome this sort of “bad press”. Roger Ailes, an American political practitioner, points out: “You get a 30 or 40 percent bump out of getting it [an advertisement] on the news. You get more viewers, you get more credibility, you get it in your framework” [4].

Ad-watchers critique may also help the targeted candidate in other ways. When a campaign advertisement is examined on news channels, the media analyst inevitably reinforces the targeted candidate’s agenda by devoting attention to the issues on which the candidate is running. Ad-watches may also elicit sympathy for the targeted candidate whose advertisement is being picked apart by a “hostile” media. It is widely known that voters do not like bias media channels. In Ukraine the odious Lapikura and Dolhanov’s programs on the television channel UT-1 confirmed it. The public’s skepticism is further fueled if it appears that the ad-watch was inspired by obviously partisan sources (such as the opposing campaign). Thus, for several reasons, ad-watch journalists may

help the cause of a candidate whose campaign publicity and advertisements have attracted this form of media coverage. In short, the media's attempts to monitor campaign publicity and advertising may backfire and actually play into the hands of the image-makers and consultants.

Third, when analysts speak about the interaction of pre-election publicity and personal system of voter values, attitudes, and beliefs and their influence upon electoral preferences, they pay attention to a so-called situation of "*issue ownership*". It is considered that campaign messages are most persuasive when they resonate with voters' stereotypes about the parties and candidates.

The voters — under the influence of various channels of communications and accumulated personal observations — elaborate a certain set of stable political expectations regarding the relative capabilities of the political parties to deal with accentuated specific issues. For example, the public of Ukraine generally considers the national-democratic parties and Peoples' Movement of Ukraine (Rukh) in particular (despite splits inside the party) more able to deal with the problem of national revival. But the leftist parties and especially the Communist Party of Ukraine are considered as more able to protect the social interests of common people.

These existing stereotypes are the important filters for assimilating specific campaign messages by certain categories of voters. The analysts consider that parties or candidates are likely to gain the greater success by advertising on those issues for which they can claim "ownership appropriation". This statement of the analysts is based on the phenomenon of "confirmatory bias" in information processing. This principle holds that people are more receptive to information that confirms existing stereotypes.

The political parties or party candidates have to weigh which problems in each particular case should be included in the election platforms and proposed for voters' consideration. In Ukraine for example, it is more or less clear what questions should be put in the center of the election programs of national-democratic and leftist parties as well as parties of a Green type. It is much more difficult to do for those parties and blocs, about which voters' stable stereotypes are not yet formed.

For this it is necessary to pay attention to another phenomenon named "cognitive dissonance" and described by social psychologist Leon Festinger. To achieve greater voters' support, the candidates or political parties in pre-election publicity campaign should overcome conflict (dissonance) between their messages and voter points of view. L. Festinger



states, the voters who may be easily influenced with the purpose to change electoral behavior — are non-partisan and the “swing votes”. A lot of election campaigns are won or lost due to consonant or dissonant message to politically undecided voters [5].

Finally, examining the influence of the interaction of pre-election publicity with the voters’ personal value system based upon their electoral preference definition, researchers pay attention to the effect of so-called “*competitive advertising*”. They assert that the impact of one candidate’s advertising is contingent on the opponent’s advertising. That is, during a campaign political advertisers are interdependent rather than autonomous actors.

In the real process of election race, there are few if any situations in which voters encounter monopolistic messages from only one candidate or party. The more likely scenario is one of competition. If to invoke a sporting analogy, the competing candidates (parties, blocs) are more like tennis players who must take into account not only the “course” (playing surface, weather conditions, etc.), but also consider the particular strength and weaknesses of the opponent.

In a situation of competition, the moments of reactivity, including of-fensive and defensive are especially important. Candidates who become the targets of attack advertisements can react in different ways: either ignore the attack, air a prompt rebuttal, use the opponent’s attack as a basis for condemning his motives, or initiate an attack on a completely separate issue. Which of the possible responses to attack advertising proves to be the most effective will depend, of course, upon the circumstances and candidates.

American sociologists tried to examine the effect of different combinations of positive and negative advertisements. In several studies, an experimental group of voters first was exposed to a pair of campaign advertisements, one from each of the candidates. Then the tone of these advertisements were varied so that some voters watched two positive messages, others watched one positive and negative, and the rest watched two negative messages. As a whole the results were as expected — there is no general rule that governs responses to opponent’s attack. But contrary to the widespread axiom of “once you get punched, you punch back”, it was found that most candidates were better off ignoring the attack and maintaining a positive campaign message [1, p. 109].

The major conclusions of the studies were as follow: “The effects of any particular advertisement depend to a great degree upon the characteristics of the opponent’s advertisements. The effects of exposure to a



particular advertisement do not yield much insight into why candidates choose particular advertising strategies. Campaign managers who rely on the marginal contributions of their own spots will pursue the wrong strategy. That is, campaign strategies based on the public's responses to one of the candidate's messages are likely to fail. Instead, campaign managers must design advertisements after anticipating the opponent's moves. Only then can they optimize the benefits of advertising" [6].

## Conclusion

Pre-election campaign communication and publicity is a complex political phenomenon and a process based upon laws of political psychology. The determining role in a campaign is played by an information component in all its symbolical manifestations as well as a candidate's skills, methods, techniques of key messages exposure to the voters, and on the basis of which they could make the choice.

With ever growing information pressure upon typical voters, the participants of an election race should turn to symbolization of their messages and at the same time take into account the influence of political stereotypes upon electoral behavior. Campaign messages must resonate with popular stereotypes and expectations. Political parties and blocs should deeper penetrate into the essence of modern information technologies presupposing the combination of traditional and modern forms and methods of communication and publicity campaigns. Those political parties and blocs capable to make it in a civilized way will increase their chances for victory.

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